Colchester Public Schools

INSTRUCTION
6141.2P ~~(a)~~

Draft January 2022 - BOE first reading 2/8/2022

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

In accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the United States prohibiting the establishment of religion it is the policy of this Board that the Colchester Public Schools ~~shall~~ **will**, at all times and in all ways, be neutral in matters of religion. This means that the Colchester Public Schools:

- will ~~shall~~ assume no role or responsibility for the religious training of any student; and
- will ~~shall~~ in no way become involved in the religious belief, disbelief or doubt of any student.

This requirement of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder Colchester Public Schools in fulfilling its responsibility to educate students to be tolerant and respectful of religious diversity. The district also recognizes that one of its educational responsibilities is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the district will approach religion from an objective, curriculum related perspective, encouraging all students and staff members to be aware of the diversity of beliefs and respectful of each other's religious and/or nonreligious views. In that spirit of respect, students and staff members may be excused from participating in activities that are contrary to religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of compelling public interest that would prevent it.

Implementation of Board Policy
When a student is absent from school to observe a religious holiday, such absence ~~shall~~ **will** be excused; when school is in session on a major religious holiday that affects a significant number of students and staff, no major examination, major assignments or new areas of study shall be introduced.

Legal Reference: First Amendment, The United States Constitution
Engel v. Vitale, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)
Lenon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971)
Lee v. Weisman, 505 U.S. 577 (1992)
Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District, 508 U.S. 384 (1993)

Policy adopted: February 9, 1999
Policy Revised: March 8, 2022

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The Colchester Board of Education shall, at all times in all ways, be neutral in matters of religion. This requirement of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder the Colchester Public Schools in fulfilling its responsibility to educate students to be tolerant of and respectful of religious diversity. This responsibility is part of the larger expectation this Board has for its schools; namely, that they foster all students' respect for the diversity of other peoples and societies.

The following administrative regulation set forth the procedures to be implemented by administration in implementing the Board of Education policy Recognition of Religious Holidays. It shall be the responsibility of the Superintendent of Schools to implement the appropriate procedures and practices within the school district.

1. The district Calendar Committee, which meets in the winter of the previous school year, will review the list and schedule of major religious holidays for consideration when developing the school calendar.

2. During August of each school year, the Superintendent of Schools will send a list of major religious holidays to the principals of each school. The list of holidays, school calendar, and policy is to be reviewed with instructional staff at faculty meetings in the fall of ~~each~~ **each** year.

3. School principals will be responsible for issuing this list of holidays to their instructional staff. A copy of the Board of Education policy shall be attached to the list of dates. Specifically, the following activities will not be scheduled on the designated religious holidays:

    a. Test/examinations/quizzes
    b. The assignment of major class projects
    c. The introduction of a new unit of study
    d. Field trips, school-wide assemblies, concerts, athletic competitions, parent activities, including open house, orientations, parent/teacher conferences, workshops

    Any sporting event which conflicts with a major religious holiday will be rescheduled when possible.

    In addition, students who are absent from school to observe a religious holiday will be afforded the opportunity to make-up any missed class work and/or homework

assignments within five (5) days of the absence.

4. The Board of Education policy and administrative regulation on religious holidays are to be included in the staff handbook of each school.

5. Principals will also publish the dates of important religious holidays in their weekly and/or daily newsletters to staff.

6. Student Handbooks should include a summary of the policy and the fact that absences due to the observance of major religious holidays will be recorded as excused absences. In order for the absence to be excused, a parent must call or submit a written note to the office, indicating that the student's absence was due to the observance of a major religious holiday.

7. Principals will inform the office personnel responsible for student attendance of the policy and ensure that absences due to religious holidays are recorded as excused absences.

Regulation adopted: February 9, 1999
Regulation revised: March 12, 2013
Regulation revised: March 8, 2022

Colchester Public Schools
Colchester, CT